

Rapid Falls In Fertility

In Recent Years

SOME FACTS

IT SEEMS TO be generally believed that Japan is the only country in which there has been a rapid fall in fertility in recent years. This is largely true outside Europe, where there has been nothing on a national scale to parallel the Japanese reduction in the birth rate from 30 per thousand in 1945-49 to 17 per thousand in 1959-61, a drop of 45 per cent.

Some almost equally remarkable developments have, however, been occurring in Eastern

Europe or, more accurately, in most parts of Eastern Europe, since about 1950. The countries that have *not* shared in this fall are Russia—much of which, of course, lies outside Europe—and East Germany and Albania. But in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia some striking diminutions in the birth rate have taken place in the last ten years or so, as may be seen from the following figures:

	BULGARIA	CZECHOSLOVAKIA	HUNGARY	POLAND	RUMANIA	YUGOSLAVIA
1945-49	24·6	23·2	19·9	28·4	24·9	28·2
1952	21·2	22·2	19·5	30·2	24·8	29·7
1953	20·9	21·2	21·5	29·7	23·8	28·4
1954	20·2	20·6	23·0	29·1	24·8	28·5
1955	20·1	20·3	21·4	29·1	25·6	26·8
1956	19·5	19·8	19·5	28·0	24·2	25·9
1957	18·4	18·9	17·0	27·6	22·9	23·7
1958	17·9	17·4	16·0	26·2	21·6	23·8
1959	17·6	16·0	15·2	24·7	20·2	23·0
1960	17·8	15·9	14·6	22·4	19·1	23·1
1961	—	15·8	14·0	20·7	17·5	22·6

The Table may be summarized as follows:

COUNTRY	APPROXIMATE YEAR OF ONSET OF FALL	PERCENTAGE DE- CLINE IN BIRTH RATE SINCE THAT YEAR
Bulgaria	1947	28
Czechoslovakia	1947	32
Hungary	1954	39
Poland	1952	31
Rumania	1952	30
Yugoslavia	1952	24

The amounts of the falls are, on the whole, remarkably consistent. The variation in the dates of onset may perhaps be associated with political events and, in particular, with the change from Stalinism to a less repressive régime, though this general trend may not account for

all the differences. They show how potent pressure from the State can be in such countries in influencing demographic events and what dramatic changes can ensue when that pressure is relieved—or replaced by different kinds of pressure.

These conclusions are in no way weakened by a study of what has happened in Albania—where the birth rate has *risen* from 32 after the Second World War to over 40 to-day—and East Germany, where there has been a rise from 13 to 17. In the second of these two instances, however, the immediate post-war figure must be regarded as being unduly depressed and one should perhaps speak of a steady but low level of fertility in East Germany.